

MEDIA EDUCATION
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TRANSCRIPT



Challenging media

CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

ADVERTISING INVADES THE CLASSROOM

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Advertising Invades the Classroom

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INTRODUCTION – Advertising Invades the Classroom

[Text on Screen]

Youth Market

Last year teens spent \$172 billion of their own money.

Children 12 years & under will spend an estimated \$40 billion this year and influence over \$600 billion of household spending.

Children will be 60% of the US population by 2005. They will spend 20% of their time in school

NARRATOR: Although public schools have never been completely off limits to commercial interests, until recently the thinking has been that schools belong to the taxpayers who support them and the millions of children who attend them. Given the size and spending power of the youth market, all that has begun to change. Marketers can no longer wait for the end of the school day to target children with commercial messages.

NAOMI KLEIN: Young people are target marketed by advertising from the minute they wake up in the morning and turn on the television to watch cartoons, on the streets, at music festivals. This is the most desirable market niche in the world. This is where companies build their brand loyalty for the rest of this person's life. So they target market to young people in many different ways.

[TV ad: Pepsi] *Pepsi drinker, for life. Pepsi – Generation Next.*

ALEX MOLNAR: It's very difficult to aggregate children in one place and market to them. Schools are where you can find children. You can find them there every day, you can find them there most of the year, and that's where the money is for advertisers.

HENRY GIROUX: Advertisers want to get into schools because kids buy things. Kids are a source of great profits. Classrooms in a sense represent the last frontier, another market place that hasn't been captured.

STEVEN EDWARDS: It's something that I think vendors have always wanted to do, is to get into the schools, but we left the door open a crack a few years ago. And we began to let them in and now you've got a, well it's a flood that has occurred as a result of just leaving that door open a little crack, the door is wide open now. And it's like having a tiger by the tail; it can get out of control very quickly.

CHRIS GERZON: So now if you bring commercialism into the schools, which before this were commercial free zones, once you bring it in, that's the final step.

Now there's not a minute of the day, except when children are sleeping, that they are not exposed to commercial messages.

ALEX MOLNAR: Essentially what's happening here is children are being described as objects whose primary purpose is to be manipulated, for some benefit, to an adult. Not necessarily an adult who cares about them, it might be a shareholder, it might be a product manager, but not necessarily an adult who has their best interests at heart.

BECKI MCCOY: In commercialism in the schools, it's just making the parents job that much harder. They are surrounded by the advertising, and the commercialism in the world outside of school. And it would be nice to think of the schools as being a place where the parent still wasn't working to safeguard them.

NAOMI KLEIN: Once ads start coming into the schools it's hard, I think for a lot of young people and even for parents and teachers to draw a line, precisely because corporatization is so omnipresent in all aspects of young peoples lives.

RANDALL TAYLOR: When you see advertising placed on a wall of a school students are liable to think that that is the correct way to go, that this is a good product for them, not realizing the district is simply, you know, making some money. And I think that a school district has a bigger responsibility than just making money, that we also have to be an example to young people.

NAOMI KLEIN: The values and goals of education are very different than the values and goals of advertising. One is asking students to look deeper to find their own answers, one is providing constant easy answers and solutions, and usually that solution involves buying something.

WILLIAM HOYNES: Schools should be a kind of oasis from the fast paced commercial lifestyle that surrounds teens everywhere they go. It seems to me that it's rather cynical to suggest that teens are sold products everywhere, so why not it school? Teens may be sold products everywhere, they might even enjoy being sold products everywhere, but schools are not about pitching to kids.

THE SHADOW CURRICULUM — Sponsored Education Materials

NARRATOR: Advertising in the learning environment is especially troubling when ads are imbedded in the curriculum. From product placement in textbooks to biased publications and videos, valuable learning time and space paid for by taxpayers, is being taken up by corporate content. Of all the strategies advertiser use to promote their products and point of view, sponsored education materials are the most covert and manipulative form of marketing to gain entry into the classroom.

[Promotional Video Produced by MasterCard]

The events of our youth are priceless.

-- But very few things in life are free.

So the sooner you learn to manage your money...

-- The sooner you learn to master your future.

What do you think the best thing is about having a credit card?

-- It's the freedom, whenever you need to buy something...

NAOMI KLEIN: A lot of teachers have decided that they can engage their students by basing a curriculum around something that they care about, and what they care about are brands. So at the same time as some teachers have come to this conclusion, all of these brands have realized that this is an opportunity, so are supplying teachers with all kinds of course material where you can learn math by measuring the circumference of an Oreo cookie, or you can learn about the environment by learning about Nike's recycling program. And these teaching materials are not at all objective. They are provided by the companies, they are a kind of public relations or themselves a kind of advertising.

CHRIS GERZON: So one way that commercialism gets into schools is by offering free things like world maps. Another way that I've seen is through the scholastic book orders that most teachers send home monthly with their students. And some of the scholastic books now are media linked, so that they'll be an offering for a *Pokemon* book, *Rugrats* book, a *Barbie* book. There are other books like Hershey's Kisses books to teach children basic math skills. This one happens to be on subtraction. There's another one; there's an M&M book that has to do with addition.

What is wrong with having children learn how to subtract using Hershey's Kisses? What's wrong is that you are subtly, or maybe even blatantly, advertising candy to children. It means that the school is sanctioning this product, and this is the best way to learn how to subtract, is through the use of candy.

MELISSA BUTLER: To a lot of teachers, oh that's cute, M&M math. You know they'll like it cause they like M&M's and we'll just do it, and they'll think their objective is just to graph or just to count. But what needs to be realized is that objective is also to say M&M's are ok and they're good and they're cool, without critically examining them.

ALEX MOLNAR: So when the teacher stands at the front of the room and promotes the sponsorship of a particular company's product let's say, or promotes a particular behavior, or in some way encourages children and their families to participate in purchasing something. All of that means that the attention is focused on that product message. For example, a program like Pizza Hut's Book-It program. Not only does the teacher set up an element of teaching reading around this companies program, but then uses an incentive, which is a corporate product, the personal pan pizza, to reward children for having met their reading goals. This is of course exactly what the company wants. They hope that the children will bring their parents into the Pizza Hut. They hope there will be future sales and so on.

NARRATOR: Many schools are unable to afford the cost of new equipment, technology, and instructional materials. In these circumstances, educators are more likely to be receptive to attractively packaged, free SEMs provide by corporate sponsors. The common practice of sending these materials directly to teachers means they bypass the normal curriculum review process and make their way into the classroom without being examined for bias, inaccurate information or blatant promotional content.

HENRY GIROUX: This is not about real learning, critical learning. I mean I think much of this curriculum material is really quite deceptive and dishonest in that, in the name of offering students real learning materials and knowledge that might be worthwhile to help them cope with the world, what they often get is simply a billboard for particular kinds of products sponsored by those particular kinds of corporations.

ALEX MOLNAR: Almost any industry that has a problem or a pitch or a point of view that it wants to promote, has some kind of so called instructional materials or curriculum materials ready and willing and able to be introduced into the schools. When Exxon had that little accident up in Alaska, boy they had a videotape sent out to almost every American High School.

[Promotional/Educational Video produced by Exxon Oil]

For years, teams of scientists have responded to oil spills to study and limit their impact on the environment. They've learned much about man's clean-up techniques and nature's powerful ability to recover from a spill.

ALEX MOLNAR: After viewing that videotape you would have thought that that oil spill was one of the best things that ever happened to the ecosystem in Alaska. I mean it was just cleaned up like that.

NELL GEISER: Corporations like Exxon are teaching, are putting together science curriculums and talking about how to environmentally, soundly clean up an oil spill. Hmm you know, is that really the right person to be teaching us about environmental stewardship? There's Dow Chemicals' new road show, Chemipalooza, where Dow Chemicals is teaching us a chemistry curriculum.

[Video produced by Dow Chemicals] *Because chemistry is power! The power to understand and improve the world we live in! And it's up to me and you to use that power...*

LAURA WILWORTH: There's a big difference when you're just watching TV at home because you know that what you see on TV and like what you see when you're out of school you shouldn't always believe it, and you should have like a filter on. But when you're in school, like, during a day of learning, you're supposed to really be paying attention and like, trying to absorb it, and like, you're just supposed to take it at face value. Like if your teacher tells you something you're kind of supposed to believe them because that's how you don't fail classes. So like, I think that the information we get in school, if it comes from a company, like an oil company teaching us that driving is good, that's like tainted information.

[Promotional/Educational video produced by Shell Oil]

The smell of the open road...

-- *Well, what about the wonders of nature?*

What about the wonders of cars and trucks and planes and gasoline?

-- *What are you talking about?*

That's how we travel, see the sights, live where we want, work where we want.

-- *What about nature? I mean...*

It takes gasoline to power the vehicles that get us to nature, and gasoline comes from nature.

-- *Gasoline comes from nature?*

Sure!

NAOMI KLEIN: I think it's really important as educators to constantly find ways to make abstract ideas relevant to their students' lives. But the tools should be genuine educational tools. They should be vetted according to very high standards. Huge efforts should be made to get all sides, a range of opinion on any given company. And the material just can't come directly from the companies or it isn't education.

CHANNEL ONE – Commercials in the Classroom

NARRATOR: One of the most visible and controversial strategies for bringing ads into the classroom is Channel One. When schools sign a contract with Channel One, they get a twelve-minute package that includes ten minutes of programming and two minutes of advertising. The deal includes TV monitors, VCRs, and a satellite dish to pick up the program. Channel One gives new meaning to the term “captive audience” because one of the requirements of the contract is that watching it is mandatory for students.

WILLIAM HOYNES: One of the principle criticisms since it’s founding of Channel One has been that it introduces commercials into the classroom. Now, supporters, perhaps apologists for Channel One suggest that there are commercials all over the schools and there is no reason why there shouldn’t be commercials in the classroom. And this is ultimately a reasonable way of funding an important educational venture.

[Lobbyist for Channel One] Over two-thirds of American youth don’t read the newspaper. Up to 90 percent of American youth never watch the news. One of the changes in the world that you grew up in and I grew up in is that children today live in a multimedia environment. Part of what Channel One provides is access to teens and youth with materials and curriculum in a way that they understand it.

WILLIAM HOYNES: Most principles, school board members and others who make decisions about receiving Channel One, in essence think that they are entering into some kind of a bargain, a trade off with Channel One. They know that they’re selling the attention of the kids. And in exchange, the kids get news, and they get news that they learn about the world from, they learn about current events from. They’re challenged to understand themselves as part of something larger. The question then really, as far as I’m concerned, focuses in on well what is the news?

Channel One’s a twelve-minute program; there’s two minutes of advertisements. They have a lengthy intro segment with computer animations, theme music, ongoing stories about Channel One schools themselves. They have a pop quiz, closing animations, theme music, credits adds up to twelve minutes each day. Schools are getting at best three minutes of the twelve minutes each day of news about current events, few of which are breaking news stories, many of which are soft news stories; sports, weather, and disasters. So we’re talking about somewhere around two minutes each day of breaking news, which is roughly the amount of advertising each day as well.

As a general rule, Channel One’s news of breaking events is simplified, dramatic, and has very little context. It’s fragmented. So events pop on the screen and pop off the screen. News is covered in little blips. When they dramatize the

news in order to try to attract a teen audience they empty the news of a large amount of its content of its critical content.

So when you think about this trade off what you have is the entry of ads into the classroom and what you get in return is a very light form of news that is more the form than the substance, and whose educational value is certainly questionable at best.

When Channel One sells itself to advertisers, they don't even talk about educational value at all. They talk about the teen audience, how hard the teen audience is to reach. That they have a larger audience each day than MTV: "If you want to sell to teens, we're your best bet."

One of Channel One's principal claims here is that it's a large audience and the largest teen audience around. But more important is that they get them where they live. Is that Channel One is able to direct your advertisement right into the classroom where our children have to be each day.

[Channel One promotional video to advertisers]

I love the commercials.

The kids have been paying attention to the commercials.

The commercials are really neat.

They're very effective. Our kids repeat them, they sing the songs, they remember them.

WILLIAM HOYNES: Now students can be sold goods and purchase them all within a matter of minutes. You can view your morning Channel One where you're sold candy and soda and when you're in the lunchroom shortly afterwards you can purchase the candy and soda.

In essence Channel One positions students as consumers. Much more so than it positions them as students. Channel One is full of economic messages about consumption and tells students over and over again from the specific advertisements in the program to the youth lifestyle that is sold from the beginning to end of the program, that consumption is what it's all about.

The point is not to devise a program that has educational value, the point is to advise a program that captures the teen audience such that they can package and sell that teen audience.

SCHOOLS IN NEED – The Politics of Funding

[TV: The Simpsons]

Our demands are simple – a small cost of living increase, and some better equipment and supplies for your children. (Crowd murmurs in support)

-- Yeah, in a dream world. We have a very tight budget. To do what she's asking, we'd have to raise taxes. (Crowd murmurs in disapproval)

It's your children's future! (Crowd murmurs in support)

-- It'll cost you! (Crowd murmurs in disapproval)

NAOMI KLEIN: You can't really talk about the presence of advertising in schools without talking about the political landscape in which this is taking place where, at a political level we are so devaluing education and really devaluing young people and their futures, that schools have felt that they have no choice but to turn to Channel One, turn to the big brands to fill that funding gap.

NARRATOR: After universal public education was established in the 1920's, federal spending for education continued to rise throughout the twentieth century until 1980, when Ronald Reagan initiated a series of cutbacks. Over the next ten years, the federal government's allotment to local education budgets went from a high of 9.8% to just 6.1% by 1990. A 38 percent reduction in funding. These cuts were part of a larger political agenda to equate funding for schools with big government programs and led to a decade of taxpayer revolt against spending increases for public education.

[News] *Mr. Reagan showed no concern at an education forum where he made his standard argument – the answer to school problems is not more money but higher standards.*

NARRATOR: Reform, not money, became the conservative rallying cry to educators who were told to do more with less.

ELAINE NALESKI: I think when someone says they support public education and then they say they're not going to support tax dollars, they try to justify it by saying that they support educational reform. They think that we should take the tax dollars we have and we should do better. It costs more to educate a child today than it did twenty years ago. And it's really hard for me to understand as an individual why they don't understand that because if they look at what they pay for a house, what they pay for a car, what I pay for groceries, what they pay for groceries, it seems so obvious that we are not paying the same now as we did twenty years ago. And yet they still want us to run our schools on what we were running our schools on twenty years ago. It's an impossibility.

ALEX MOLNAR: What has changed in the last twenty years is given the economic vulnerability of public schools and the demands placed on them given the attacks on public schools and the quality of education that children receive,

and given the pressure in this deregulatory, privatizing environment to cooperate with businesses, schools have become more and more vulnerable to all sorts of pitches.

STEVEN EDWARDS: Boards of Education had policies that prevented you from accessing private funding. But those restrictions have been softened significantly over the last ten years because funding has not been available.

[CBS News] Voters say education is their number one issue so the candidates have made it theirs.

NARRATOR: While the majority of Americans believe that education is a national priority, there is less consensus about increased spending for public schools because it means raising individuals' taxes at the local level.

ELAINE NALESKI: The reason we have ads in schools is because we had to find a way to support our schools other than tax dollars because we weren't getting tax dollars. We couldn't get a tax increase. So therefore we had to come up with other ways to get funding into our schools or our schools were going down hill.

STEVEN EDWARDS: In our district we're talking about significant cuts, so what are you going to fund? Only basically essential items. And as time goes by, the nonessential items wear down, break down, and you can't afford to replace these items. So, that's what happens. So you get caught in that situation where, jeez, this company is willing to give us this if we'll do this, and we can buy x amount of TVs and VCRs, or we can buy a new score board or we can you know, even with our school store I've bought student desks out of candy money because we didn't have enough student desks for the incoming population. So, you know it gets to be a real difficult situation.

HENRY GIROUX: It seems to me we can't blame schools and we can't blame teachers for all of a sudden doing everything they can within the worst of circumstances, to try to get resources. In some cases it seems to me they have no choice. I mean kids are their first priority.

STEVEN EDWARDS: One thing that we have taken advantage of are agenda booklets. If we are to purchase agenda booklets for our school it's about \$5000 a year. Our kids don't buy agenda books. They can't afford it, they don't see it as valuable, so therefore there are companies out there that will give you free agenda books, but those booklets have advertising in them. I think that agenda booklets are extremely valuable to help kids establish organizational skills and time management skills. So it's a plus to have those, I think that out-weighs the negative of the few ads that are in there.

HENRY GIROUX: When you don't have resources, you're kind of a slave in many ways to people who do. And unfortunately the people who do have the resources in this country are not the teachers, are not the school boards, are not the communities; they're the corporations.

I mean why is it the most powerful public resource that we have is so devalued that teachers in schools have to beg for money? That they have to sort of hold themselves open to the highest bidder just to simply survive, just to have curriculum materials, just to have pencils, just to get media materials, just to have basic kinds of resources.

NARRATOR: One reason for these chronic shortages is that at the same time that local communities were saying no to property tax increases, corporations were aggressively pursuing tax breaks from state and local governments. The resulting loss in revenue often meant drastic cutbacks for schools leaving educators to search for alternative funding sources.

ALEX MOLNAR: All of which leads to an environment in which schools are asked and in some cases told to be good partners with corporate America, whatever that may mean. In other words, there's no corporate partner that should be turned away. Corporate America is the benefactor.

So what you get is, you get the schools pretending to be, or demonstrating themselves to be good partners with corporate America. That's their payoff. They get to be seen as good partners. And for corporations, they get access to the schools and they get access to the kids and they get to market themselves like crazy inside the schools with the school's blessing and sanction.

ARNOLD FEGE: Well they never say that they contribute. Channel One never said that the reason they went into the schools was to help their own market share. They also said this was a public service. Really that's what marketers do is they sublimate the public service argument for their private interests.

ELAINE NALESKI: We want their money. We want their products; we want them to support our schools. But at the same time we do not want our students to be bombarded with advertising. And we don't want our schools to be used for advertising, and we struggle with this all the time.

ARNOLD FEGE: There are examples of positive corporate and public partnerships around the country where corporations do make contributions to their public schools without asking in return that they market any of the products.

ELAINE NALESKI: I'd rather go out and say would you partner with our schools, would you send in your volunteers, would you sponsor this particular technology program, would you donate five hundred computers? Would you work with us

and bring your people and become a real partner with our schools. I'd much rather do that.

MELISSA BUTLER: If we took the initiative and said, "We want business partnerships, but we want them to be responsible. We welcome any corporation to come sit down at the table with us, if you would like a tax-deductible donation we will take that, this is what we need. But you don't get advertising as part of that. This is your public service."

ARNOLD FEGE: The commercial sector is one of the publics, they're one of the stakeholders in public education and they have a responsibility and indeed a right to support public schools. They do not have a right to buy their way into public schools. They do not have a right to capture part of the schools time. They do not have the right to capture part of the kid's minds.

SWEET DEALS – Exclusive Soda Contracts

NARRATOR: One of the fastest growing commercial trends in public schools is the prevalence of vending machines hallways and cafeterias that are accessible to students throughout the school day. While the USDA has rules governing the placement of these machines, these rules are intended to prevent competition with government sponsored lunch programs and are often circumvented by administrators who feel pressured to increase revenue through sales. Many parents are not aware that their children are buying soda, candy, and other foods of low nutritional value in school, which often take the place of breakfast and lunch.

BECKI MCCOY: A couple of years ago I was student teaching in a local middle school. And, what I saw were kids who had access to the vending machines throughout the entire school day. And when I got there at 7:30 in the morning, these children, these ten, eleven, and twelve year olds were lined up in front of the vending machines.

LINDA PAGE: I also saw more and more machines, bigger and fancier and flashier machines. And it didn't take a lot for students to you know, I think build up their need for those products.

SENATOR PAUL PINSKY: You know, I think it's hypocritical for a state to require students to take a health course, that's a requirement for graduation and only one section of the course be on health and diet, you know the pyramid, everything else. Yet down the hall at nine o'clock in the morning, there's a soda and candy machine where students are allowed to consume high quantities of sugar, foods that are bad for you.

LINDA PAGE: It is a question that I think we need to consider more than once. And that is, are we sending a mixed message to our students by saying that you need to live healthier and you need to take care of yourself and you need to take care of your bodies. And by the way the vending machines are open. Are we promoting a lifestyle that's unhealthy?

[Text on Screen] Teenage boys consume approximately thirty-four oz of soda per day. Teenage girls consume approximately twenty-two oz of soda per day. They now drink twice as much soda as milk.

ALEX MOLNAR: What we know is that American children are becoming more and more obese. And that attendant to that increase in obesity is earlier and earlier onset of Type 2-diabetes. Serious adult Type 2-diabetes. What correlates most closely with obesity in children is soft-drink consumption, which has exploded, particularly among teenagers.

NARRATOR: The increase in soda consumption by students has been fueled by the widespread practice of schools signing exclusive contracts with soft drink manufactures. These deals mean that in exchange for a specific amount of money, schools guarantee the company the exclusive right to sell its products on school premises or at school functions. In the fierce competition for the youth market, exclusive soda contracts have become one of the fastest growing and most cost effective strategies for turning students into “brand loyal” consumers.

STEVEN EDWARDS: Some of your major soda companies, bottling companies are very aggressive in trying to get their market share into the public school setting. I was told once by a major bottling company, that a child or an individual makes their decision by age thirteen for their soft drink choice for the rest of their lives, about ninety percent of the population. So, if a distributor can get into a school, middle school or a high school, they can significantly influence that market. If you can get those across the country, well you can significantly influence the market of a large number of children.

ALEX MOLNAR: Exclusive soft drink contracts, in essence, give the schools a financial incentive for children to consume more of a product that the agriculture department says has little or no nutritional value and shouldn't even be sold in schools.

NARRATOR: In Colorado Spring's District 11, a former school administrator went so far as to draft a memo instructing building principals to push Coke products to meet new sales quotas. The memo offered a number of helpful suggestions including: that students be allowed to purchase and consume vended products throughout the day, that purchases are closely linked to availability – “Location, location, location is key. You may have as many machines as you can handle.” Finally, the memo touted the “long term benefits” of meeting sales goals. The memo was signed by John Bushey, the “Coke Dude.”

ALEX MOLNAR: Well, it makes me sad to say it, but one of the worst groups to work with if you are concerned about advertising in schools, are school administrator groups. These groups have supported and promoted exclusive soft drink contracts across the country and their usual line (soft drink contracts among many other sorts of corporate marketing initiatives), their usual line when you talk to an administrator is, “Well we just need the money.”

[FOX News Interview: Daniel Fuller, National School Boards Association]
Well we have fifteen thousand school districts in this country educating forty-seven million children. We are experiencing tremendous short falls in both state and federal funding. If a local school district can collaborate with a business to provide innovative programs for children that will result in increased educational benefits and opportunities for those children, they should be free to pursue those on a local level.

ALEX MOLNAR: Let's consider that for a moment. The amount of money that most of these deals bring in on a per pupil basis is relatively trivial, that's one thing. The second thing is that the money that's brought in is raised in ways that are arguably harmful to children.

LINDA PAGE: Maybe you aren't paying the taxes for schools right now, but we may be paying taxes for health care. We may be dealing with obese children and juvenile diabetes and a number of things that we wouldn't have if we were able to take a stand in our schools to say, "We know this isn't healthy."

RESISTING COMMERCIALISM – Legislative Action

NARRATOR: Senator Pinsky was someone who decided to take a stand on the vending machine issue. Driven by concerns for student health, and what he saw as complicity on the part of school administrators, Pinsky brought a bill before the Maryland Senate Sub-Committee. The bill would place tighter controls on the types of products that could be sold in vending machines and when vending machines could be turned on during the day. Senator Pinsky's bill would have created an important policy precedent statewide for reviewing and controlling commercial activities in publicly funded schools.

[At Hearing: SENATOR PAUL PINSKY] We have a responsibility. Will students still go to a 7-11 and buy junk food? Absolutely. Will they eat junk food at home? Absolutely. Does that mean we can't stake a stand and start change the dynamic in the culture? We can do that.

NARRATOR: The Pinsky bill was opposed by an organized and well-funded lobbying effort, comprised of vending industry representatives who framed the bill as a drastic first step toward banning all candy sales and consumption.

[At Hearing: Maryland/DC Vending Association Representative] Where are we going to stop with all this kind of stuff? Very seriously. The purpose of the bill is to get these food items, these consumption items out of the hands and mouths of children.

NARRATOR: The bill was also opposed by lobbyists for school boards and school principals who argued for retaining local control over an important funding source that many have come to rely on.

SENATOR PAUL PINSKY: Having a bill, even at a starting point is important. We have to start putting some control on, we have start making an issue of education, of health of what role commercialism plays in our schools.

NARRATOR: The fierce opposition to the Maryland bill highlights the difficulty in passing legislation at the state or federal level where corporate lobbying has a greater influence on decision-making.

SENATOR PAUL PINSKY: You can't just put a few legislators out there who are going to change people's minds. A lot of my colleague's minds are going to get changed when they look back home and the hundreds of thousands of prospective voters saying, "You better do this or else." And I think we need that kind of grass roots dynamic, that motion going on across the state.

RESISTING COMMERCIALISM – Local Activism

NARRATOR: The most effective strategy for creating policy change is to work directly through local school boards, as happened in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where a coalition of students, parents and educators came together to oppose an exclusive Pepsi contract under consideration by the district.

RANDALL TAYLOR: The cola contract was brought to the Board of Directors' attention, to our business affairs department, who had negotiated an exclusive contract to distribute products in our high schools, particularly. And they would be the only product that would be allowed in our high schools, and I think most of the board of directors looked at it as an opportunity for about a million, a million-five of basically free money.

NARRATOR: While the school board was looking at the monetary benefits of the proposal, it was the coalition that asked it to consider the cost.

DARBY KAIGHIN SHIELDS: We were just saying, we want to table the issue. We want to give it time. We want to look at it. We want to examine the contract. We want to know what's going on, basically. How come we didn't know it was going on?

MELISSA BUTLER: I prepared a statement to speak at the public hearing, and I talked to teachers in my building and to other teachers I knew and tried to get them to come, at least to give some kind of physical support when other people were speaking.

TOM PANDALEON: We educated sufficient number of the board members so that they tabled the issue. We then bought a month of time to further educate those board members who were with us, and those that weren't with us. You can debate commercialization and the commercialization of society until the cows come home and people are going to disagree. There's really not much of an argument on the health issue.

DARBY KAIGHIN-SHIELDS: We wanted to show the most dramatic way of how much sugar is in a can of Pepsi and wanted to see what the reaction was from the Board and what they thought was in a can of Pepsi. I started with one teaspoon and looked up at the Board, no? Two teaspoons, three teaspoons, four, tell me when to stop, nine, ten teaspoons. With a couple other chemicals or coloring, it's pretty much this and some water, is what you are drinking or you're buying – Pepsi Cola.

RANDALL TAYLOR: I think all of us were surprised to see the level of sugar content, and it was quite a heated debate about the product, about the safety of the product, about the health of the product, about their contracts. One of the things Tom Pandaleon and others were able to inform me of, were basically

loopholes in things that were in the contract they had written with us which would put, I think, our district in harm's way of having to repay tens and tens of thousands of dollars if schools didn't sell enough of the product.

NARRATOR: The proposed contract for 1.5 million dollars was based on a projected sales figure that was twice the current level of soda sales in the Pittsburgh school district. The district would have to *increase* sales by increasing consumption or end up owing Pepsi whatever the shortfall amounted to.

TOM PANDALEON: If the sales weren't there, if twice the sales were not there, sooner or later within that five year period the central administration and the principals and ultimately the children were going to feel the pressure to purchase more stuff.

RANDALL TAYLOR: That becomes a question of what do we exactly take money for and are we doing something that is the best interest of the students? In this particular case, I don't believe taking that action was in the best interest, the best educational message that we could give our students.

TOM PANDALEON: These contracts encourage adults to think of children in a particular way and I think that's dangerous because the way that they encourage adults to think about children is as a market, as a captive market in the school building, and I think that's a change in attitude that's dangerous because it's exploitative.

NARRATOR: After getting the Pepsi contract tabled, the next move for the coalition was to develop policies for reviewing future proposals to ensure that the economic needs of the district are always consistent with the best interest of students.

MELISSA BUTLER: We really feel like instead of always being on the defensive, that we really want to be pro-active and set some standards for what you will allow, for what you won't allow in terms of all corporate contracts, from athletics to in the classroom, to what we will accept through the mail as teachers to very large contracts such as this. So, we hope that within the year we can get something like that to the Board to raise their consciousness and to move in that more positive direction.

WHAT'S AT STAKE – Keeping Education Public

HENRY GIROUX: Schools are one of the few entitlements we have for children. One of the few guaranteed entitlements left. That needs to be protected, but it needs to be protected in the language of the public good and not in the language of the market place.

MELISSA BUTLER: John Dewey says, “What one person wants for his or her child we should we want for the whole community of children.” The idea of public-ness as important, of really looking at public schools historically and how they serve all of the populations of children and families, and looking at that purpose very seriously, that it is the only place to equalize that we have in our country.

NAOMI KLEIN: I mean, I’m not going to pretend that what is happening in the schools is something that students aren’t exposed to all the time. So, on one level you *can* say, “what’s the big deal?” but the big deal is that I think young people *deserve* a place because it may be the only place in their lives where they are treated as citizens and free thinkers because they are not going to get it on television, and they might not even get it at home, and they are not going to get it on the streets where they are bombarded with commercial messages, they are not even going to get it a music festivals, in cultural events which are totally sponsored. So, we need to protect public education because it is the only public space left.

HENRY GIROUX: I think that public education has a long tradition, in a sense, taking seriously that there is relationship between schooling and democratic public life, and that if democratic values are going to have any meaning whatsoever, schools essentially are the place to reproduce those values and to instill in students the possibility being critical citizens, to learn how to participate in public life, learning all those skills that expand the possibility for students in a sense, not just something to be privatized individuals, but to public individuals, to learn in many ways how to govern and not simply be governed.

ALEX MOLNAR: There’s great difference between being a citizen and being a consumer. Children, I think need to be taught and to learn in their own daily experiences, that their best and highest purposes is not to buy a particular brand of jeans or drink a particular brand of soda, that they are valuable and important just because they are alive. And they have rights, and they have purposes, which are vital to our survival as a democracy. And that’s the vision that is at stake here, and that’s the vision that I believe schools need to promote.